

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A support system for diagnosing printer problems, comprising:
a support server having a rules engine for parsing printer diagnostic data into
5 components, for analyzing the components and for generating a suggested solution based on
combinations of printer diagnostic data and error conditions; and
at least one printer, located remote from the support server, wherein the printer
includes a printer driver, responsive to a request for support, for communicating with the
support server;

10 wherein, responsive to a request for support from the printer, the printer transmits
printer diagnostic data to the support server;

wherein, the rules engine parses and analyzes the printer diagnostic data and
generates a suggested solution and the support server transmits the suggested solution to the
printer.

15 2. The system of claim 1, wherein the support server and the printer
communicate over the Internet.

20 3. The system of claim 1, wherein the support server further includes a printer
diagnostics utility; wherein responsive to a request for support from the printer, the support
server transmits the printer diagnostics utility to the printer; and wherein, upon receipt of the
printer diagnostics utility, the printer generates printer diagnostic data.

25 4. The system of claim 1, wherein the printer driver further includes a usage
profile utility for generating and storing usage information and printer status information
during operation of the printer and wherein, responsive to the request for support from the
printer, the printer transmits the usage profile information and printer status information to
the support server.

5. The system of claim 2, wherein the printer further comprises a web browser for pointing to a web page at the support server.

6. The system of claim 2, wherein the printer further comprises a web server for
5 generating web pages pertaining to the printer.

7. The system of claim 6, wherein the printer and the support server communicate over the Internet via a web browser;

wherein the printer driver further includes a usage profile utility for generating and
10 storing usage information and printer status information during operation of the printer; and

wherein, responsive to the request for support from the printer, the web server attaches the usage profile information and printer status information to a web page for the printer and transmits the web page to the support server.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein the printer has a unique identifier and wherein
15 the support server further comprises a memory for storing historical information pertaining to the printer comprising a record of the request for support, the printer diagnostic data and the suggested solution.

9. The system of claim 8, wherein the support server transmits historical
20 information to the printer.

10. The system of claim 8, wherein the support server verifies warranty
information for the printer.

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11. The system of claim 2, wherein, the printer further comprises a processor, a memory storing a web browser and an input/output device having a display.

12. The system of claim 1, wherein the printer is coupled to an input/output
30 device for receiving user requests for support and for displaying received solutions.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein the input/output device comprises a personal computer.

5 14. The system of claim 12, wherein the input/output device comprises a wireless device.

15. The system of claim 12, wherein the input/output device comprises a processor, a memory and a front panel display in the printer.

10 16. The system of claim 1, wherein on receipt of the suggested solution, the printer executes the suggested solution.

15 17. A support system for diagnosing printer problems, comprising:
a support server having a rules engine for parsing printer diagnostic data into components, for analyzing the components and for generating a suggested solution based on combinations of printer diagnostic data and error conditions; and

20 at least one printer, located remote from the support server, wherein the printer includes a printer driver, responsive to a request for support, for communicating with the support server, a usage utility for generating and storing printer diagnostic data during operation of the printer, wherein printer diagnostic data comprises usage profile information and printer status information, and a web server for generating web pages pertaining to the printer;

25 wherein, responsive to a request for support, the printer driver loads a web browser, the web browser accesses a web address associated with the printer and invokes the web server, the web server generates a web page containing any stored usage profile information and printer status information and transmits the stored printer diagnostic data to the support server;

wherein, the rules engine parses and analyzes the printer diagnostic data and generates a suggested solution and the support server transmits the suggested solution to the printer.

5 18. A method of remotely diagnosing printer problems in a support system having a support server and at least one printer located remote from the support server, comprising:
 sending a request for support from the printer to the support server;
 transmitting printer diagnostic data to the support server;
 using a rules engine to parse the printer diagnostic data into components and to
10 analyze the components;
 generating a suggested solution based on combinations of printer diagnostic data and error conditions; and
 transmitting the suggested solution to the printer.

15 19. The method of claim 18, wherein the support server and the printer communicate over the Internet.

20 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the printer includes a printer driver having a web browser for pointing to a web page at the support server and wherein the step of sending a request for support from the printer to the support server comprises accessing the web browser.

25 21. The method of claim 18, wherein prior to sending a request for support, generating printer diagnostic data at the printer during operation of the printer and storing the user profile information and printer status information at the printer.

 22. The method of claim 21, wherein the printer diagnostic data comprises usage profile information and printer status information.

23. The method of claim 18, wherein subsequent to transmitting the request for support, transmitting a printer diagnostic utility from the support server to the printer; and using the printer diagnostic utility to generate printer diagnostic data.

5 24. The method of claim 18, further comprising storing historical information pertaining to the printer comprising a record of the request for support, the printer diagnostic data and the suggested solution at the support server.

25. The method of claim 24, further comprising transmitting stored historical
10 information to the printer.

26. The method of claim 18, further comprising verifying warranty information
for the printer.

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